

2004

Exhaust

Sarah Freligh
St. John Fisher College

Debra K. Dean
St. John Fisher College

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Cover Page Footnote

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SARAH FRELIGH AND DEBRA KANG DEAN

EXHAUST

February and
the snow's worn out everywhere
stained by dogs, exhaust

the glint of menacing fangs
these lengthening icicles

harden, heart braces
for an arrow's stab. wear it
on your sleeve just once

still, the empty crystal vase
waits for a single flower

touched tonight only
by the moon's unflattering
light, an old scarecrow

bows to the west wind. Tracking
his master's scent, a black dog

a wind-blown red leaf
pressed against the pane—his kiss
on her perfumed wrist

leaving a wet circle on
the white tablecloth, a glass

intact amid the
rubble of one more façade—
a small miracle

just one step, she said, a slow
stroll from this world into that

other one, see the
strange I's. Take two steps: beware
sun's glare on new skin

under a cool white nightie,
like a sliver of moon, thinned

to soft gauze over
her elbows, remembering
a catalogue of

lines—and contours defining
the body's shape: lobes, lips, nipples . . .

an old trick, counting
toes and fingers, waiting for
the eleventh hour

in the stalled duplicity
of cells splitting and binding

I was dreaming—what
was I dreaming, tell me, when
the blue curtains yawned?

A black horse, her fast canter
trampling the raw grass, tender

crocuses blooming—
by slow degrees they turn to
drink in clear sunlight

pools of heat, closer now: oh
spring, can we start to believe?

MICHELLE BOPP

NAKED

Desperately I clamber for what remains,
I find myself too late.

Lost in violence and tears,
no final call for help.

“Try to live without me!”
Words throb; fists curl.

My face lit by the moon,
vulnerable and exposed.

Unforgiving darkness bites, slaps,
only fear exasperates.

Silent pleading goes unnoticed.
Anguish gropes.